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(b) Except as provided in this part, the ALJ shall not be bound by the Federal Rules of Evidence. However, the ALJ may apply the Federal Rules of Evidence, where appropriate, e.g., to exclude unreliable evidence.

(c) The ALJ shall exclude irrelevant and immaterial evidence.

(d) Although relevant, evidence may be excluded if its probative value is substantially outweighed by the danger of unfair prejudice, confusion of the issues, or by considerations of undue delay or needless presentation of cumulative evidence.

(e) Although relevant, evidence may be excluded if it is privileged under Federal law.

(f) Evidence concerning offers of compromise or settlement shall be inadmissible to the extent provided in Rule 408 of the Federal Rules of Evidence.

(g) The ALJ shall permit the parties to introduce rebuttal witnesses and evidence.

(h) All documents and other evidence offered or taken for the record shall be open to examination by all parties, unless otherwise ordered by the ALJ pursuant to § 224.24.

§ 224.35 The record.

(a) The hearing will be recorded and transcribed. Transcripts may be obtained following the hearing from ALJ at a cost not to exceed the actual cost of duplication.

(b) The transcript of testimony, exhibits and other evidence admitted at the hearing, all papers and requests filed in the proceeding constitute the record for the decision by the ALJ and the A.I.D. Administrator.

(c) The record of the hearing may be inspected and copied (upon payment of a reasonable fee) by anyone, unless otherwise ordered by the ALJ pursuant to § 224.24.

§ 224.36 Post-hearing briefs.

The ALJ may require the parties to file post-hearing briefs. In any event, any party may file a post-hearing brief. The ALJ shall fix the time for filing briefs, at a time not exceeding 60 days from the date the parties receive the transcript of the hearing or, if applicable, the stipulated record. Such briefs may be accompanied by proposed find-

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ings of fact and conclusions of law. The ALJ may permit the parties to file reply briefs.

§ 224.37 Initial decision.

(a) The ALJ shall issue an initial decision based only on the record, which shall contain findings of fact, conclusions of law, and the amount of any penalties and assessments imposed.

(b) The findings of fact shall include a finding on each of the following issues:

(1) Whether the claims or statements identified in the complaint, or any portion thereof, violate § 224.3;

(2) If the person is liable for penalties or assessments, the appropriate amount of any such penalties or assessments, considering any mitigating or aggravating factors that he or she finds in the case, such as those described in § 224.31.

(c) The ALJ shall promptly serve the initial decision on all parties within 90 days after the time for submission of post-hearing briefs and reply briefs (if permitted) has expired. The ALJ shall at the same time serve all parties with a statement describing the right of any defendant determined to be liable for a civil penalty or assessment to file a motion for reconsideration with the ALJ or a notice of appeal with the A.I.D. Administrator. If the ALJ fails to meet the deadline contained in this paragraph, he or she shall notify the parties of the reason for the delay and shall set a new deadline.

(d) Unless the initial decision of the ALJ is timely appealed to the A.I.D. Administrator, or a motion for reconsideration of the initial decision is timely filed, the initial decision shall constitute the final decision of the A.I.D. Administrator and shall be final and binding on the parties 30 days after it is issued by the ALJ.

§ 224.38 Reconsideration of initial decision.

(a) Except as provided in paragraph (d) of this section, any party may file a motion for reconsideration of the initial decision within 20 days of receipt of the initial decision. If service was made by mail, receipt will be presumed to be five days from the date of mailing in the absence of contrary proof.

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(b) Every such motion must set forth the matters claimed to have been erroneously decided and the nature of the alleged errors. Such motion shall be accompanied by a supporting brief.

(c) Responses to such motions shall be allowed only upon request of the ALJ.

(d) No party may file a motion for reconsideration of an initial decision that has been revised in response to a previous motion for reconsideration.

(e) The ALJ may dispose of a motion for reconsideration by denying it or by issuing a revised initial decision.

(f) If the ALJ denies a motion for reconsideration, the initial decision shall constitute the final decision of the A.I.D. Administrator and shall be final and binding on the parties 30 days after the ALJ denies the motion, unless the initial decision is timely appealed to the A.I.D. Administrator in accordance with § 224.39.

(g) If the ALJ issues a revised initial decision, that decision shall constitute the final decision of the A.I.D. Administrator and shall be final and binding on the parties 30 days after it is issued, unless it is timely appealed to the A.I.D. Administrator in accordance with § 224.39.

§ 224.39 Appeal to A.I.D. Administrator.

(a) Any defendant who has filed a timely answer and who is determined in an initial decision to be liable for a civil penalty or assessment may appeal such decision to the A.I.D. Administrator by filing a notice of appeal with the A.I.D. Administrator in accordance with this section.

(b)(1) A notice of appeal may be filed at any time within 30 days after the ALJ issues an initial decision. However, if another party files a motion for reconsideration under § 224.38, consideration of the appeal shall be stayed automatically pending resolution of the motion for reconsideration.

(2) If a motion for reconsideration is timely filed, a notice of appeal may be filed within 30 days after the ALJ denies the motion or issues a revised initial decision, whichever applies.

(3) The A.I.D. Administrator may extend the initial 30 day period for an additional 30 days if the defendant files

with the A.I.D. Administrator a request for an extension within the initial 30 day period and shows good cause.

(c) If the defendant files a timely notice of appeal with the A.I.D. Administrator, and the time for filing motions for reconsideration under § 224.38 has expired, the ALJ shall forward the record of the proceeding to the A.I.D. Administrator.

(d) A notice of appeal shall be accompanied by a written brief specifying exceptions to the initial decision and reasons supporting the exceptions.

(e) The representative for the Government may file a brief in opposition to exceptions within 30 days of receiving the notice of appeal and accompanying brief.

(f) There is no right to appear personally before the A.I.D. Administrator.

(g) There is no right to appeal any interlocutory ruling by the ALJ.

(h) In reviewing the initial decision, the A.I.D. Administrator shall not consider any objection that was not raised before the ALJ unless a demonstration is made of extraordinary circumstances causing the failure to raise the objection.

(i) If any party demonstrates to the satisfaction of the A.I.D. Administrator that additional evidence not presented at such hearing is material and that there were reasonable grounds for the failure to present such evidence at such hearing, the A.I.D. Administrator shall remand the matter to the ALJ for consideration of such additional evidence.

(j) The A.I.D. Administrator may affirm, reduce, reverse, compromise, remand, or settle any penalty or assessment determined by the ALJ in an initial decision.

(k) The A.I.D. Administrator shall promptly serve each party to the appeal with a copy of his/her decision and a statement describing the right of any person determined to be liable for a penalty or assessment to seek judicial review.

(l) Unless a petition for review is filed as provided in 31 U.S.C. 3805 after a defendant has exhausted all administrative remedies under this part and within 60 days after the date on which